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Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century on statistical capacity-building

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission a report prepared by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21). This report outlines the efforts of the Partnership in promoting the better use of better statistics as a central part of the enabling environment for development progress, particularly through support to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics with a focus on low-income countries, through advocacy and by encouraging donor collaboration in statistical support programmes. The Commission is requested to take note of the report, which is submitted to the Commission for information.

Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century on statistical capacity-building

I. Executive summary

1. With the increasing emphasis on managing for development results, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware of the importance of statistics in informing and designing development interventions. The Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 4 and 5 February 2005, called upon countries to design national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) so as to provide a framework for strengthening statistical capacity across

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the entire national statistical system in order to meet evolving national and international user needs and priorities for statistics in a more coordinated, synergistic and efficient manner. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) is assisting countries in the development of their national strategies by drafting supporting documentation, through advocacy, and by promoting donor collaboration, organizing regional workshops to discuss issues and share experiences, and helping countries secure appropriate financial and technical assistance for the design and implementation of their strategies.

II. The national strategies for the development of statistics

2. With the increasing international focus on results-based management, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware that good statistics are part of the enabling environment for development. Strengthening statistical capacity is therefore essential to supporting the design, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, sector strategies, and the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In recognition of the development community's reliance, in managing for results, on good, timely statistics, the Second International Roundtable issued the six-part Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, which encourages all developing countries to design and implement national strategies for the development of statistics so as to improve the evidence base by providing a strategic framework for developing relevant poverty-focused statistics.

4. A national strategy provides a country with both the means to strengthen statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system and a vision regarding where the system should be in 5 to 10 years and sets milestones towards realizing that vision. It encompasses a robust framework and action plan for building the statistical capacity to meet both current and future data needs. In particular, the aim is to align statistical development with wider poverty-focused national development programmes and strategies.[1]

III. Role of the Partnership in the national strategy process

5. In line with the Marrakech Action Plan, the Partnership has focused on assisting low-income countries in designing a strategy by the end of 2006 and in starting to implement it by the following year in order to have nationally owned and produced data for all relevant Millennium Development Goal indicators by 2010.

6. The Partnership supports country efforts to design, implement and monitor their national strategies for the development of statistics primarily through the following types of activities:

- Development of national strategies for the development of statistics methodology: the Partnership offers methodological advice and documentation, targeting different audiences and purposes.

- Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools designed to assist countries and donor institutions in making the case for increased support to statistics and for adopting a strategic approach to statistical development.
- Promotion of donor collaboration: the Partnership encourages and facilitates information-sharing and aid harmonization among donors, including through its light reporting mechanism (see para. 10).
- Partnership regional programmes whose main components include (a) establishing baseline assessments; (b) organizing regional workshops; (c) undertaking advocacy efforts to garner political support for the design and implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics; (d) consolidating partner efforts on the national level; (e) mobilizing technical and financial support for the design and implementation of national strategies; and (f) reporting on progress made.

IV. Progress in supporting country efforts towards designing, implementing and monitoring national strategies for the development of statistics and directions for future work

7. In collaboration with its partners, the Partnership has made great strides with respect to assisting country efforts in designing, implementing and monitoring national strategies for the development of statistics. Examples of recent progress made and future directions in specific activities are given below.

8. *Development of national strategy methodology*: A national strategy advocacy paper and design guide were produced in late 2004 and made available as background documents to the Commission at its thirty-sixth session. A guide to drafting a national strategy road map has also been produced and translated into several languages. A knowledge base of key documents written by PARIS21 partners on how to carry out national strategy processes (for example, stakeholder analyses, user needs assessments, human resource strategies, data quality assessments) has been produced and launched on the Partnership website.[2] Most of the material destined for the knowledge base exists already but where there are gaps, new guidelines are being commissioned. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will produce a guide on how to design a strategy for developing the national agricultural statistical system and how to integrate that strategy into the system-wide national strategy for the development of statistics. Similar guides will be commissioned for other sectoral statistics issues. Throughout 2006, the emphasis will change from supporting the design of national strategies for the development of statistics to supporting strategy implementation, including the production of a guide to national strategy implementation and building the knowledge base with case-study materials on implementing processes of change. Topics for other papers to be produced include exploring the relationship between national strategies for the development of statistics and the poverty reduction strategy papers and between national strategies for the development of statistics and the Millennium Development Goals.

9. *Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools*. In 2005, the Partnership produced a francophone statistical advocacy film entitled *La statistique au service du développement*, which makes the case for increased support to

statistical development. In collaboration with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a similar film is being produced on agricultural statistics. The Partnership has also produced a paper entitled "Measuring up to the measurement problem: the role of statistics in evidence-based policy-making" (available from http://sitesources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/Measuring_Up_to_the_Measurement_Problem.pdf) (January 2005) which demonstrates how the availability and use of statistics have led to positive development results and how the absence or lack of statistics has led to bad policy decisions. A series of pamphlets, leaflets and presentations based on this paper have been produced. The Partnership has disseminated these products and advocated for the better use of better statistics at every available opportunity.

10. *Promotion of donor collaboration.* The first Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDev), held in Addis Ababa on 12 and 13 May 2004, had underlined the need for greater exchange of information among technical and financial partners who supported statistical development in African countries. In addition to contributing to a stronger collaboration and harmonization among these partners, such an exchange would support the preparation of national strategies for the development of statistics in African countries. In response to this identified need, the Partnership developed a light reporting mechanism, which covers donor information on statistical activities in a specific country or region, the type of assistance provided, the duration of the activities, the type and amount of funding, references to any documentation related to these activities, and the institutional contact person. The light reporting mechanism has been launched to all donors supporting statistical development in Africa, and a summary report of the findings of this exercise will be presented at the second FASDev meeting, scheduled in Addis Ababa for February 2006. If successful, this mechanism may be replicated for other regions and operationalized annually.

11. *Regional programmes.* Within the framework of its regional programmes, the Partnership has produced baseline assessments on the status of strategic statistical planning in all countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Similar exercises are under way for the other regions of the developing world. Regarding the mobilization of financial resources, the Partnership and the World Bank are working closely to channel countries towards funding mechanisms such as the Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and the African Development Bank for design of national strategies for the development of statistics and the STATCAP lending facility for implementation of the national strategies. There is also evidence that bilateral funding of statistics is increasing; however, more is needed to help countries implement their strategies. Technical resources to assist countries in the design of their national strategies are also lacking. In collaboration with several partners, including the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Partnership organized a series of briefing sessions for potential consultants. The objective of these training sessions was to present the national strategies for the development of statistics approach so that the consultants would be better informed on how to advise countries preparing their strategies. Since focusing its efforts on national strategies for the development of statistics in 2004, the Partnership has co-organized with its partners a dozen regional workshops on designing national strategies in the regions of the Arab States, Central America and sub-Saharan Africa. A series of similar workshops are planned for Asian subregions, starting with the South Asia workshop (December 2005). These workshops aim to

assist country national strategy design teams in addressing burning issues relating to strategy design and implementation. Pursuant to collaboration among the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Partnership, ECA and the World Bank, a Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity-Building in Africa was launched in 2005. The overall objective of the initiative is to formulate a regional strategy for guiding future statistical capacity-building activities in Africa. The Framework will, in particular, be focused on strategic direction and appropriate implementation instruments for improving the planning, financing, management and coordination of statistical development activities. It is expected that this new Framework, once adopted by all stakeholders, will help create much-needed synergies, reduce duplication of efforts, and lead to sustainable statistical capacity in the African region.

Notes

[1] A more detailed discussion of national strategies for the development of statistics was provided in the report of the Partnership (E/CN.3/2005/18) submitted to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session in 2005.

[2] Available from http://www.paris21.org/pages/designing-nsds/NSDS-documents-knowledge-base/index.asp?tab=KnowledgeBase.